

**Remarks of
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to the

**National Truck Driving Championships and North America Inspectors'
Championship Awards Banquet
Columbus, Ohio
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Reading Version

[Administrator Sandberg]

INTRODUCTION

- On behalf of President Bush and Transportation Secretary Mineta, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here this evening.
- And, I want to congratulate all of the drivers and inspectors in today's competition.
- Your knowledge, dedication and hard work exemplify the excellence we ALL strive to achieve in our commercial vehicle highway safety programs.

SAFETY GOAL

- Safety and security are the President's top transportation priorities.
- President Bush and this Administration are committed to fostering the safest, most secure national transportation system possible, even as we seek to enhance mobility, reduce congestion, and expand our economy.
- These are goals that are compatible. It is essential that the Nation's transportation system be both safe and secure while we are making our economy more efficient and productive.
- At the Department of Transportation, we are not willing to accept what has become far too commonplace – people dying on our roads every day.
- Under Secretary Mineta's leadership, we are taking new approaches, finding new solutions, and working with our valued partners, to achieve a higher level of safety and security for all Americans.
- As **Pioneers in Transportation**, we will continue to pursue and develop "best practices," breaking the mold and achieving results that benefit the nation by reducing crashes and increasing security on our Nation's highways.
- As **Architects of the Future**, we are becoming visionary in our view of what is possible in transportation to achieve results in improving commercial motor vehicle safety and security.
- And as **Defenders of the Homeland**, we will continue to play an important role in preserving, protecting and defending our nation, our way of life, and our citizens.

SAFETY GOAL

- The FMCSA is committed to achieving the U.S. Department of Transportation's highway safety goal -- reducing the fatality rate in all motor vehicle crashes by 41 percent from 1996 to 2008.
- As part of the overall departmental safety goal, FMCSA's goal is to reduce commercial vehicle crash fatalities to 1.65 fatalities per 100 million miles of truck travel.
- Achieving our safety goal will be challenging because commercial vehicle miles of travel is increasing at a rate faster than passenger car miles of travel.
- Together, we have made important progress toward meeting our goal.
- The large truck fatality rate has decreased five years in a row. In fact last year the decrease was 4.2 percent – the largest in a decade. Even with these gains, we know more must be done.
- Working together, we can reduce large truck fatalities.
- Working together, the American Trucking Associations (ATA), the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), State law enforcement professionals, and industry can make the highways safer for all of us.

REAUTHORIZATION

- Let me take just a moment to say a word about something we can work together on to improve highway safety.
- Recently, the President transmitted to Congress the Department of Transportation's highway reauthorization proposal, which will help us reach our 2008 safety goal.
- SAFETEA – The Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 – is the largest surface and public transportation investment in U.S. history – 6-year, \$247 billion proposal.
- The proposal is organized along three themes: Safer, Simpler, Smarter.
- SAFETEA provides framework to maintain and grow transportation infrastructure and provides funding to reduce fatalities and increase security on our Nation's highways.

- SAFETEA will make U.S. transportation safe and secure, and will make our economy more efficient and productive.
- Congress must face up to their responsibilities and pass the Department's 6-year reauthorization legislation.

SEAT BELT USAGE

- Each year, more than 42,000 Americans die and millions more are injured on our highways and roads. That's more than 14 times the number of American's killed by terrorists on 9/11.
- In addition to the human cost, the cost of these crashes on our overall economy and health care system is staggering.
 - Cost for unbelted: \$20 billion.
- One-third of all lives lost in traffic crashes result from people not wearing safety belts.
- For every one percentage point increase in seatbelt use, 250 lives are saved.
- Most CMV driver fatalities involve two incident types
 - Run-off-road/rollover
 - Hitting a large stationary object
- Many of those killed in these types of incidents died because they failed to wear their seat belts and were ejected from the vehicle.
- 48 percent belt use among commercial drivers
 - 55 percent usage rate for major US or regional fleet CMVs
 - 44 percent usage rate for independent/local fleet CMVs
- It's time to buckle up! Every trip...every time...before the wheels roll.

VEHICLE CONDITION AWARD CRITERIA

- The proper functioning and maintenance of a driver's equipment is very important to the safe operation of one's vehicle.
- A driver's ability to conduct an effective safety check of his or her vehicle is a key part of their daily routine.

- Accordingly, it is one of skills tested at the National Truck Driving Championships.
- The Vehicle Condition Award recognizes the significant connection between truck safety and a comprehensive pre-trip inspection.
- It also rewards the driver who has best demonstrated exceptional knowledge of truck equipment, and skill in evaluating truck condition.
- In selecting the winner, the Selection Committee considered each contestant's pre-trip inspection score and comments, their responses to the written exam, and the comments during the personal interview.
- The Committee also considered the inspection form and all other pertinent information gathered during the competition, including the driver's overall approach to equipment safety.

AWARD WINNER

- Before I announce the winner of the 2003 Vehicle Condition Award, here's some facts about this very special driver.
- He/She is a professional driver competing in the _____ (class to be supplied).
- He/She is employed by _____ (company to be supplied).
- He/She works out of _____ (city to be supplied).
- He/She has been driving for _____ (years to be supplied).
- He/She reports _____ (crash-free miles to be supplied).
- Please join me in congratulating the winner of the 2003 Vehicle Condition Award, _____ (award winner to be supplied). Please come forward and accept the award.

CONCLUSION

- Thanks again for the opportunity to be with you this evening. Congratulations to all today's award winners!

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